

House Republican Press Release

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REP. FREY REMINDS RESIDENTS OF NEW STATE LAWS TAKING EFFECT



State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, today reminded residents several new laws have taken effect on July 1. One of the most noteworthy can help the state address eminent domain issues, said Rep. Frey.

Public Act 06-187 creates an Office of Ombudsman for Property Rights to develop expertise in eminent domain law, assist public agencies and property owners, inform the public, mediate disputes about eminent domain and relocation assistance, and recommend changes to the legislature. It also requires a public agency, before starting an eminent domain action, to make a reasonable effort to negotiate with the property owner to buy the property and provide the property owner with certain information.

In addition, the office will develop expertise in the law regarding taking private property; assist public agencies in applying eminent domain law and analyzing actions with potential eminent domain implications, on request; assist property owners, on request, concerning eminent domain procedures; identify government actions with potential eminent domain implications and advise agencies, as appropriate; inform the public about eminent domain laws and their rights and recommend changes in eminent domain laws to the Legislature.

“This initiative was one positive element of the latest state budget package,” said Rep. Frey, who joined House Republican Leaders in calling for the reform of eminent domain laws following the landmark Supreme Court decision last year that allows state and local governments to take private property by eminent domain for commercial development. “I am pleased that our calls for eminent domain reform yielded an important start toward addressing this issue.”

Also taking effect July 1 is a new law (Public Act 06-43) that creates a felony crime of trafficking in persons. It applies to those who coerce others to engage in prostitution or work. It authorizes the state to charge traffickers with racketeering and to seize property related to the crime when there is a pattern of such activity. The bill makes trafficking in persons a class B felony, punishable for up to 20 years imprisonment, up to a 15,000 fine, or both. It also appropriates \$75,000 each for training programs and witness protection services and \$25,000 for shelter and victim services. The need for this legislation was highlighted recently by a case in New Fairfield in which illegal immigrants were

allegedly coerced into prostitution, said Rep. Frey.

In addition, new measures take effect creating a deduction on the state income tax for contributions to the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET--the state-sponsored college savings plan). It will allow taxpayers to carry forward any unused deductions for five consecutive years as long as each deduction does not exceed the annual maximums, which are \$5,000 for single filers and \$10,000 for joint filers.

“As the costs of a quality education continue to go up, having options like this to help parents are extremely important,” said Rep. Frey.

Finally, Public Act 06-136, which was cosponsored by Rep. Frey, takes effect July 1. It will provide for improvements to highways and mass transit in all corners of the state, allocating \$2.3 billion over a 10-year period. In western Connecticut, the legislation includes funding for the completion of the engineering and design phase of widening I-84 between Waterbury and Danbury and to upgrade rail cars and begin the electrification of the Danbury rail line.

“Seeing this funding take effect has been a long time coming,” said Rep. Frey, who is the only legislator from the Greater Danbury delegation who serves on the Legislature's transportation bonding sub-committee. “It ensures that our area's transportation needs remain high on the list of state priorities for ongoing transportation improvements.”